

THE INVALUABLE WOMEN OF RURAL AMERICA

The Condition of the Woman of the American Farm Is Not as It Was in the Old Days.

DURING last summer and autumn I spent considerable time in the rural district. By birth and bringing up a countrywoman, by nature inclined to interest myself in all that concerns women, likewise a smattering of sociological and economic conditions, I have found much to think about in the American rural regions.

For one thing, the American farm woman has changed not a little since the old days. Her mental scope is broader. Heavier responsibilities have been forced upon her, and she has accepted them. In some cases she whines a good deal under the burden, but more often not. More often she goes on sufficient to all emergencies and rather proud of it. Charlotte Perkins Gilman has started the fogies of this land by declaring that married women would be better off and happier all round if they earned money of their own and were self dependent. Charlotte's heart would leap with joy if she were to see the farm women I have been among recently.

There is a popular hallucination that three or four great financiers, so called, hold up this nation. No doubt they do in one sense. Some of their holdups are historic. But a chief factor in the real prosperity and development of the republic is and is to be the unknown, unsung women of the American farm districts.

Not long ago I asked a grocer if he had any good country butter. "Country butter," you must know, is farm butter as distinguished from that made at the machine plant called a creamery.

"Sam," said the grocer to his clerk, "has old lady Jones brought her butter in yet?"

Old lady Jones had done so, and her dairy product was prime. She had established so good a name for herself in the butter-making field that she derived a considerable income therefrom. One woman well known to me clears several hundred dollars yearly from her farm dairy and her poultry. If she were paid wages for housework she would earn several hundred more, but she generously donates the household labor.

There, too, is what one might call the summer boarder cult. It is spreading year by year. Hundreds of thousands of city folk annually now pass from two weeks to three months at farmhouses in the summer. It is not much fun, and it is a matter of much hard work for the countrywoman to take care of all these people, with their town whims and prejudices, yet she does it, mostly without grumbling, and

here, too, is a source of considerable income.

"Well, what of it?" asks the fogey. "Haven't farm women always worked as hard as they could? Haven't they always sold butter and eggs to pay for the family groceries?"

Yes, my friend; the farm woman always has worked as hard as she could, and time out of mind has sold butter and eggs. But if you think she still buys the family groceries and even the old man's chewing tobacco with them you would be more than half wrong. Just here is the subtle change that has taken place in the farm woman. She does not buy the family groceries and the old man's chewing tobacco as much as she did.

She has learned better. She has become a money earner on her own account. She still works as hard as they ever did. Still they provide a home and bread and meat for their families. In pioneer days that was enough; at least it was considered so.

Now the civilized requirements of even a respectable farm family are six times as great as they used to be.

Give me the luxuries of life and I can do without the necessities, says somebody. Just so. It is the embroidery of the human life that differentiates it from mere existence and makes it worth the living. And it is the women of American rural districts who put in the embroideries and turn existence into real living. They do it through the independent money they earn. No doubt tobacco is an evil thing. Yet I know one girl who gave herself a year at college from the proceeds of a tobacco crop she had tended with her own hands. She became a schoolmistress, bright and brainy. Nobody, to see the neat, refined young woman, would ever dream of associating her slim, pretty hands with the indescribable processes incident to the raising of tobacco plants.

Numbers of women have undertaken the serious task of cattle rearing. From

time to time you will read of wealthy women who keep herds of fancy cattle as a fad, but the women who are never in the newspapers do much more in the management of bovine stock than the rich woman who rears prize heaves for diversion. I know of one woman who possessed through inheritance considerable land of her own. For years she experimented with the usual farm tenant, altogether with the usual result, land getting poorer and poorer, crops growing less and less, the aggravations and exasperations yearly growing greater. At last this clever woman hit on the plan other farmers have adopted successfully—turning her farm into hay and pasture land and fattening heaves for the market. Then she saw light and has prospered since. She has her bank account now.

In the old time the farmer's wife and daughter had no bank accounts of their own. If there was a bank balance at

all it was in the hands of the man of the house. Now most of the states give a married woman the right to her own earnings. Thousands of farm women have profited by the liberal law and when they have money to lay by bank it in their own names. Sometimes a wife has a bank account when her husband has none, and again the woman's money is in one bank, the man's in another. The gain in freedom, self helpfulness and self reliance in the case of farm women is remarkable to one who knew their submissiveness in former condition twenty-five years ago.

I have noticed how much more attractive in appearance farm homes in the middle west are than they used to be. In drives with a friend about one locality I knew formerly I mentioned and commented on the pretty homes we passed. The houses were freshly painted; the yards, fences and entrance to the house were in perfect order and even showed an approach to the artistic.

"It's the women that do it," said my friend. "The women in this little settlement sew for the city shops. Much of the clothing sold in the big city stores is made in these cottages in the country. The women do their housework and keep their children in school. They fix up their homes with the money they get for the sewing."

One daintily clean home I entered looked to me so pretty and well furnished, the grounds around it were so attractive, that I could not help speaking of it to my mistress.

"We've done it all ourselves, the girls and I," said she. "We even set the posts ourselves and stretched the wires for the fencing."

"They can because they think they can," sang the old Latin poet thousands of years ago.

Yet cases not a few there are where in the countrywoman must do more than put in the embroideries. She must carry all the load up the hill road of life. A country widow there was

She Accepts Her Increased Responsibilities Cheerfully and Is Mistress of the Situation.

with two little sons. Heaven knows how she managed to get bread and shelter for them, but she did, and, ing, nursing, doing rough work of all kinds for her neighbors. She kept the older boy in school till he was large enough to go to work, then he helped himself. That was some years ago. Now the older son is a highly respected professional man; the younger is supporting his plucky, noble mother. Occasionally, too, there is the so-called husband and father, with his variously the household of children to be fed and clothed. Here the woman feeds them, as she must, but who can blame her if her soul is full of bitterness? I saw one of these no account men a few days ago. He is a devotee of the whisky bottle. His wife and grown daughter support the family by making the shop clothing, and one day the daughter fainted at her sewing machine. But that did not stop the grind. The grind must go on, no matter how ghastly the price.

"We didn't put up no jelly last summer," said the no account man. "Sugar's too high."

The whisky he had poured down his throat would have bought sugar enough to provide jelly for a regiment all winter. I looked the individual over carefully. I wanted to "size him up." Once in New York city a day's session was produced by the arrival of several Kentucky mountaineers. The point of interest about them for the city folk was that they had never in their lives worn any stockings, being genuine "Socksless Simpsons" even in zero weather. Well, you wouldn't believe it unless I told you solemnly, but this no account farm man had not a sign of a stocking to his feet, though it was biting winter, with snow on the ground. Fact! My friends know that though I can tell a lie, I won't. Here in a prosperous county of the middle west, not an hour by train from a great city, in a neighborhood where the farmhouse has its telephone and daily paper, where the village has its electric lights and trolley cars, this man goes about sockless in the snow, and he does not do it for his health either.

Much pleasanter to think of are the brave, clean, comfortable women of rural America. Obscure and unknown themselves, their children, well fed, well bred and well schooled, go out from their country homes to hold their republic together and build it up. For their children the unknown, uncelebrated mothers toil. I have seen scores of these women driving about the country, fearless, independent, understanding themselves and the world around them. I greet them and bow to them. The old time has passed.

ELIZA ARCHARD CONSER.



A HOME AT WHICH JACK FROST WILL NOT BE A NEW YEAR'S GUEST—AT PALM BEACH, FLA.

A Practical Method of Avoiding Nervous Prostration; Kate Clyde Seeks Rest on a Hudson River Farm

THIS is the age of what I call "how" literature. The idea is, you read a certain number of pages and you know all about how to do it.

That would seem an easier way than learning by experience. "How to Earn Your Living," "How to Be Beautiful," "How to Make Friends," "How to Be Happy." These are only a few of the subjects lightly treated in attractively bound volumes. You get them for a dollar or so, and, behold, you solve one of the big problems of life without working it out!

Then there is the practical series—practical this and practical that—but the chief of them all is called "Practical Religion." It's a new easy way of saving your soul and makes getting in to heaven a cinch (according to the author), and it costs only 75 cents. Then there are home study courses. They let a woman be anything. But yesterday gave me my first genuine surprise in that line. It was a luxurious home study series in twelve volumes teaching one how to be a housemaker.

There is a volume on babies, one on older children, one on textile fabrics, which includes materials for house and table decoration and also dress. It tells you how to make buttonholes and other fastenings, how to darn or do simple embroidery, how to make children's clothes, etc. Another volume deals with household economics. In others you read about cooking, hygiene, home nursing, interior decoration, etc.

In a word, it teaches woman the profession which she ought to know by nature, but which she has scorned and forgotten in her wild endeavor to master everything else. Now, you see, housemaking is no used to the level of a profession, and we pay to learn our own trade.

That's a good sign. It shows that women are realizing that their most successful careers do not consist in outwitting men and that it's quite a profession in itself to be a competent wife and mother.

I hope there will be some more books of that sort published.

"Oh, For a Ledge," Etc.

A friend who has an analytical nature was discussing a man and wife who quarrel all the time, and she said: "They would be able to live together if they could get away from each other occasionally."

How true that is, especially in these nervous times!

You read of couples who have lived for years in perfect harmony and have never been separated for an hour.

I say you read of them!

But the sensible woman goes on a vacation now and then, and the sensible man does the same.

Half the time we make life unpleasant for each other simply for physical reasons, because we are worn out and want a rest. After we have enjoyed a week or even a Sunday off we come back with an entirely different point of view and wonder why we ever found things so hard.

Every city man, says my friend the doctor, ought to have some place in the country where he may rest from Saturday till Monday every now and then. And every city woman should have some place, either with friends or as a paying guest, where she may take the rest cure in the same way.

"Spare your nerves, my city friends," says the good man, "and you will avoid nervous prostration and a whole lot of unhappiness."

As for myself, I admit there's an old farmhouse I fly to when New York and life in general get on my nerves. It's only a little over an hour by rail from town, and they always give me a big room at the top of the house with three dormer windows and quaint green furniture. All the old books you ever heard of line the walls, and from the windows you see miles of the Hudson and the beautiful surrounding hills.

I am there now curled up on the center of an old fashioned bed writing

I am there now.



this. I am very lazy, you see, and don't get up until noon. My breakfast tray is on a table at my side, and the glow of a pleasant fire fills the room.

Outside the snow is falling, making a fairyland out of the tall, leafless branches of the trees.

You would think you were thousands of miles from any city. Three days of this beat all the tonics and medicines in the world.

Apropos of Furs.

Speaking of snow brings me quite naturally to the subject of furs. Good skins are worth their weight in gold this year. The head of one of the fashionable shops in town told me that he could not get men any longer to take the risks they used to. They don't want to go up into the wilds of the frozen north or across the continent into Siberia and Russia,

They get too well paid for things with less risk attached to them.

"Women are beginning to wear horse-skin," he said, "and if prices continue to go up because of the scarcity of wild animals we shall see all the domestic animals forced to give up their pelts, and dog, cat and rabbit skins will be quite the thing. By the way," he added, with a grin, "cat-skin is more popular than its wearers have

any idea of. You ought to see the line of ermine some of it makes!"

The husband of a friend was buying a set of mink furs for her the other day. The price was \$300. The salesman showed him a set of sable of which the price was \$3,000. The man knows mighty little about fur, by the way.

"Now, what's the difference?" he snorted. "Same size, same color, same

everything, and mine's \$300, and that one is \$3,000."

The salesman picked up the sable muff. "Well, you see, a man had to go to Russia for this," he began, when the other interrupted him.

"Enough said!" he cried. "It's worth it!"

I agree with him.

A woman I know has just returned from there, and she brought, hidden



THE RICHEST BOYS IN THE WORLD.

The two sons of Mrs. Marshall Field, Jr., the widow of the late Marshall Field's only son, are the richest little boys in the United States. The great Chicago merchant left an estate valued at \$150,000,000. Of this fortune is to be held in trust until one of his grandsons reaches the age of fifty years. Then, if both are living, the estate is to be divided between them, the elder receiving three-fifths and the younger two-fifths. Marshall Field 2d is now thirteen years of age, and his brother Henry is eleven. Shack, is well known in both American and European society.

which is so essential to every well regulated life. Politeness always pays, and the nice girl always attracts to her nice people.

The charm of a nice girl is fascinating, irresistible. No one can get away from it. Her smile is contagious and infects her surroundings with the virus of happiness.

A sprained wrist should be bathed in hot water and vinegar and a damp, cold rag afterward be wrapped loosely around the injured part and the whole covered with a piece of oiled silk. A

very hot bran or bread poultice applied at once to a sprained ankle will often prevent swelling. Cold salt and water douches also do a great deal of good to strengthen the weak wrist or ankle.

Paris has now several women licensed cab drivers, and they have had the curious experience of finding that only men wish to be driven by them, lady fares up to the present holding some what aloof.

Cecilia Makiwane, a Kaffir woman, has been appointed nurse at Butterworth hospital, Cape Colony, after a

three years' course of training at the Lovedale Native Institute. She is the first colored woman in South Africa to hold such an appointment.

Saddles for gentlemen came into use in France in the year 600, for ladies, introduced in England by Ann, queen of Richard II, 1387.

All the Swedish sugar manufacturers have decided to form a combination with a capital of 15,000,000 kroner—a sum worth about \$3 cents.

Official figures issued by the registrar general give a birth rate for Eng-

land and Wales of 27.2 per 1,000, being 1.8 below the ten year average.

An interesting experiment is being made on the stage in America. From time to time the leading ladies in a piece exchange roles, a device intended to relieve these players from the monotony attendant upon long runs of successful productions.

Rice thoroughly washed, thrown into a large kettle of rapidly boiling water and boiled continuously for twenty minutes, then drained and dried in the oven or over the fire, will be white, dry

and mealy and look like a great pile of snow.

Consulted as to her views a working woman declared herself to be strongly in favor of suffrage for women "because it would be very convenient to be able to threaten to vote for the other side."

Wives of French business men, as well known, quite commonly assist in their husbands' commercial affairs, and for such wives it is claimed that they "afford much being, even after hours, always willing to talk shop."

Next week I shall be back in town and I shall give you some trivial news.

Kate Clyde

At a Farmhouse on the Hudson.

The farm is going to rack and ruin.

It is a vicious circle which imprisons a foolish woman who won't realize that she gains nothing by distributing the small amount of strength which she has in order to make it go around. The strength of the milk is not increased. On the contrary, each share becomes weaker.

Then, too, there are some occupations that hurt each other. For instance, no woman who is a brain worker should make her own clothes. If a top nervous an occupation.

But if you get me on that subject I could talk forever. Strange how serious the country makes one!

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OF INTEREST TO WOMEN.

New Zealand has now its domestic servants' union, one proposed rule of which is that servants are to have all the statutory whole holidays, any work done on those days to be paid for extra at the rate of 1 shilling per hour.

To keep palms in the house in a healthy condition you should sponge the leaves once a week with tepid water in which is $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of soda milk. Then stand the plant quite $\frac{1}{2}$ day in lukewarm water for two hours.

treated in this manner will live a long time.

Geraldine Farrar, the beautiful American opera singer, while at Berlin aroused so much enthusiasm that at her farewell concert a crowd of German women stormed the platform, and attendants had to rescue her from these admirers by force.

There is no galsaying the fact that the cultivation of good manners has much to do with high-mindedness.

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